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AUTHOR Hanson, Kaye Terry
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ABSTRACT

A study at Brigham Young University (Utah) sought to identify basic concepts to teach graduate students preparing for international business careers. Business presentations by graduate students fluent in English and at least one other language were examined for evidence of teachable skills for working with business in two languages. Presentations were videotaped in both English and one other language. Presenters and evaluators viewed the tapes and completed evaluations. Four teachable concepts emerged, including include: (1) use of audience analysis to determine appropriate communication strategies; (2) organization of the presentation to enhance listener comprehension and compensate for grammatical errors and cultural differences; (3) self-confidence; and (4) simplification of the idea and its expression in the foreign language. Appended materials include the form used by presentation evaluators, and a sample description of culturally appropriate behavior for Finland. (MSE)

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BUILDING INTERNATIONAL BRIDGES THROUGH COMMUNICATION TEACHING

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Dr. Kaye Terry Hanson
Department of Information Management
590 Tanner Building
Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah 84602

FL018917

Abstract

An ever shrinking world presents the probability of working with other cultures and other languages. A study in its second year at Brigham Young University indicates that teachers of communication can aid this international business process by four simple communication ideas. These are: 1. audience analysis, 2. presentation organization, 3. self confidence, and 4. idea simplification.

Building International Bridges Through Communication Teaching

Can we teach graduate business students better ways of communication in dealing with international business?

An ongoing study at Brigham Young University indicates at least four basic concepts can be taught to aid the graduate student to prepare for a career in international business. The first year of the study (1988) pinpointed the first two concepts: 1. Audience analysis, and 2. Presentation organization. The second year of the study (1989) reinforced those two concepts and added at least two others: 1. Self-confidence, and 2. Idea simplification. This paper will discuss how the study is being conducted, audience analysis and presentation organization from the first year's study, and self-confidence and idea simplification from the second year's study.

Two factors make BYU a significant location for this study. First, international communication is common at Brigham Young University. Most students have completed voluntary missionary service for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints--the sponsoring

institution of BYU. As a result, fluency in foreign languages is common. In addition, many non-American students choose to study at BYU. They approach graduate work with English as their second language.

The BYU location gives a second resource--the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies. Specialists there who are interested in teaching language have been most helpful in providing cultural and background information on practically every language in the world.

In January of 1988 I began a study of business presentations by graduate students who are fluent in English and at least one other language. I wanted to know if there are teachable skills in working with business in two languages.

Method of Study Originated In the Classroom

In a graduate MBA class of oral presentations I asked for volunteers to give the same 3-minute presentation they were preparing on a business topic in whatever second language they knew. I also asked for volunteers who spoke those second languages to come to listen and critique. Response was excellent. Eleven presenters emerged the first year and 34 presenters emerged the second year. Several more volunteers

emerged who wanted just to listen and critique.

First we videotaped each presentation in English. Then the students came to the taping lab on another day and we videotaped their "other language" presentation. Listeners filled out Evaluator Forms (see Appendix A) as they observed the presenters.

In the two groups we have now studied the languages were as follows:

- o Nine spoke Cantonese first, English second
- o One spoke Czechoslovakian first, English second
- o One spoke French first, English second
- o One spoke Hindi first, English second
- o One spoke Korean first, English second
- o Four spoke Mandarin first, English second
- o One spoke Nepali first, English second
- o Three spoke Portuguese first, English second
- o One spoke Spanish first, English second
- o Two spoke English first, Cantonese second
- o One spoke English first, Finnish second
- o One spoke English first, French second
- o Two spoke English first, German second
- o One spoke English first, Italian second
- o Two spoke English first, Japanese second
- o One spoke English first, Korean second

- o One spoke English first, Mandarin second
- o One spoke English first, Norwegian second
- o Three spoke English first, Portuguese second
- o Five spoke English first, Spanish second
- o One spoke English first, Swedish second
- o One spoke English first, Thai second

At the conclusion of each presentation the presenter filled out a Presenter Form (similar to Evaluator Form, Appendix A). Later, "communication specialist" colleagues and I filled out Evaluator Forms as we viewed the videotapes.

Two Concepts Emerged From First Year of Study

Two communication concepts--significant in both languages--emerged quickly even from this initial study. Both these concepts are basic to communication, not specialized to international communication. However, evaluations brought them up again and again. They are:

- o Analyze your audience
- o Organize your presentation

Analyze Your Audience

How can we approach audience analysis? One young graduate student of mine illustrated the difficulty when he told me about the presentation his father--a

successful American physician--had been asked to make in Chile the previous year. The physician spoke in English with a Spanish translator at his side. In his preparation he had merely decided to use a presentation he had made successfully several times to English speaking audiences. Imagine the doctor's dismay when no one laughed at his jokes. How could he have been better prepared?

One method is to study cultural backgrounds. Since such study is potentially complex and prohibitive for busy employees we looked for shortcuts. One such shortcut has been prepared by the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies which is located at BYU. The Center has prepared 90 Culturgrams (see Appendix B) which include information on greetings, gestures, eating, attitudes, as well as the people, the nation, and the lifestyle.

The Culturgram for Germany, for example, indicates "to talk with the hands in the pockets is considered disrespectful." The Culturgram for Hong Kong cautions "the open hand, rather than the index finger, should be used for pointing." And from the Finland Culturgram we learn that "folding one's arms is a sign of arrogance and pride." My student's father may not have been

prepared for subtleties in Chilean humor, but he would have been more prepared than he was had he had access to something like a Culturgram.

The BYU study regarding audience analysis is briefly shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1

Audience Considerations When English is Learned Second

Name 1st language	Observations
Marcos Portuguese	o Used larger gestures in Portuguese o Used smaller space in Portuguese
Benoy Nepali	o "I've never been in a business setting at home, only a family setting." o Used stronger nonverbals in Nepali
Fook Cantonese	o Cantonese-speaking peers said "Most American of us all."
Gabriel Cantonese	o Chose formal word usage in Cantonese o Cantonese-speaking peers said "Most Chinese of us all."

Table 2

Audience Considerations When English is Learned Second

Name / 2nd language	Observations
San Finnish	o Used more gestures in Finnish
Kurt Norwegian	o Considered audience less in Norwegian o Had to think of words, not audience
Paul German	o Smiled more in English o Used more specific language in German
Tim Portuguese	o Used more animation in Portuguese o Felt more relaxed in Portuguese

Now that we have looked specifically at observations regarding audience analysis, let's turn our attention to the organization of the presentation.

Presentation Organization Aids Clarity

Organization principles become more significant in a second language presentation. When a listener can

track without question what a presenter means, it compensates for grammar errors and cultural differences. Organize simply into beginning, middle, and end.

New information for most students--since they have used the scientific method for so much of their schooling--is that the business world wants a managerial method. That is, get the main idea up front. Students with international experience stressed that their understanding increased with the main idea up front.

Table 3 and Table 4 support the importance of organization. They also include observations about language. Though language and organization are certainly two different things, this preliminary study seemed to indicate that language problems were more tolerable when the organization improved. By the way, all errors in language or body language were tolerated more by anyone who already had had experience living in a foreign country. This remained true even when some listeners were asked to evaluate presentations in languages they didn't understand.

Table 3

Language and Organization Observations When English is Learned Second

Name 1st Language	Observations
Marcos Portuguese	o Felt inhibited in Portuguese after preparing in English o Seemed at a loss for words
Fook Cantonese	o Good organization in both languages o Lower professionsl word choice in Cantonese
Gabriel Cantonese	o Unclear purpose in English o Beginning, middle, end clear in Cantonese
Farfalla	o Good purpose and points in Cantonese o Flow choppier in English o Content very complete in Cantonese

Table 4

Language and Organization Observations When Other Language is Learned Second

Name 2nd Language	Observations
San Finnish	o Easier in Finnish because of subject o Used some slang instead of correct language
Kurt Norwegian	o Concerned with words in Norwegian rather than ideas o Accurage organization helped thinking
Paul German	o Excellent organization in German o Ending in German especially clear
Peter German	o Felt he tripped over German words o Organization in German was precise
Tim Portuguese	o Had to use notes in Portuguese

Self Confidence

In the second year of the study an effort was made to quantify results. This quantification will be reported specifically in later papers, but a few numbers here will support the point. Presenters were asked to rate their language other than English on a scale of "very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, slightly dissatisfied, slightly satisfied, satisfied and very satisfied." The viewers rated the presenter according to the same scale. In every case--without exception--the viewers rated the presenters as high or higher than the presenters rated themselves.

In addition, we included numbers in five areas--content, verbal, paraverbal, nonverbal, and style (10 points each area, 50 points total)--in an effort to compare the presenters'and viewers' reactions to each presentation. Again, without exception, the viewer numbers are higher. Of 45 participants the average self rating was 39 points and the average rating of viewers was 43.3 points. Interestingly, the higher ratings remained whether the presenter was more comfortable in language 1 or language 2.

Simplify the Idea in the Second Language

Presenters felt more satisfied with their work in

their second language--whether is was English or something else--when they simplified the language expressions. They lamented, for example, "I didn't know some technical words." "Japanese takes longer for me to speak, so I cut some out." "I had to talk too fast." and the experience of all who get comfortable with a second language and come up against a word they just then realize they don't know, "I invented words!"

Classroom Concepts Can Aid International Communication

Audience analysis, presentation organization, self confidence, and idea simplification are four important concepts in teaching international communication. Though these four communication concepts are in no way unique to international business, they aid international communication in important ways.

Audience analysis can be improved by considering the cultural backgrounds of the listeners. Shortcuts such as Culturgrams aid presenters. Audience analysis is important even if the presenter speaks in English to those of another culture.

Organization can be taught by stressing the importance of having a beginning, a middle, and an end. Support for each point in the middle aids clarity.

Self confidence can be improved by teaching that the viewers are more tolerant of us and our errors than we are ourselves.

Idea simplification can be taught by knowing similar concepts take longer to present in the second language than they do in the first.

With an ever shrinking world, more and more of our students will encounter the need to work with people of other cultures and other languages. In the classroon, we can better prepare them for that work.

Reference

Culturgram reprinted by permission. For catalog and information contact Brigham Young University David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies, Publication Services, 280 HRCB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, (801) 378-6528.

APPENDIX A

EVALUATOR FORM

Cross-Cultural Oral Presentation Evaluation

Evaluator:
Native of:
Association with Presenting Language/Country:
Mission Yes [ ] No [ ]
Business Yes [ ] No [ ]
Study Abroad Yes [ ] No [ ]
Other_____

Presenter:
Presenting Language/Country:
Topic:
Live Presentation [ ] or Video [ ]
Date:

How long did/have you live(d) there?_____
How long has it been since you have lived/been there?_____
What region of the country were/are you in?_____

What do you think the presenter's objective was in giving this presentation? Do you feel that he/she accomplished this objective? Explain.

How satisfied were you with this presentation? Circle the appropriate indicator and explain.

Very Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Slightly Dissatisfied Slightly Satisfied Satisfied Very Satisfied

Circle the language in which you felt the most satisfied with the presentation. Explain.

English _____

List the number of times you were confused during the presentation. Explain.

Were you adversely affected at some point in the presentation? Yes [ ] No [ ]
If you answered yes, circle the degree to which you were affected and then explain.

slightly turned off turned off slightly alienated alienated slightly offended offended

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While referring to the applicable **CULTURGRAM** describe the presenter's performance in the following areas:

Circle aspects that are excellent
√ aspects that need improvement
Comment on aspects with a Circle or √
Add additional aspects that apply to this language and culture
Indicate the overall rating for each major area (Content, Verbal, Paraverbal, Nonverbal, Style)

	High										Low
CONTENT	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Comment on the following:											
Accurate											
Complete											
Concrete											
Relevant											
Logical											
Understandable											

VERBAL	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Comment on the following:											
Morphology											
Syntax											
Lexicon											
Phonology											

PARAVERBAL	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Comment on the following:											
Pitch											
Tone											
Rate											
Volume											
Stress											
Inflection											

NONVERBAL	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Comment on the following:											
Eye Contact											
Gestures											
Grooming											
Posture											

STYLE	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Comment on the following:											
Diction											
Grammar											
Polish											

OTHER CULTURE SPECIFIC AREAS

CULTURGRAM*

100 mi.
100 km.

Republic of Finland

CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

Greetings: It is customary to shake hands with men and women when introduced. People may sometimes use both hands, but further physical contact is usually avoided. When introduced, people mention their full names or a title and last name. Although in the past it was not appropriate to use first names until invited to do so, it is now quite common, especially among the youth, to use first names on first meeting. A raised hat (or raised hand if a hat is not worn) is the proper way of greeting people from a distance.

Visiting: Punctuality is expected when visiting a home or office. When visiting a private home, Finns usually take a few flowers for the hostess. Such visits are invariably an excuse for serving coffee, black or with cream, and cakes or biscuits. Guests should not raise their glass, at least not for the first sip, until the host has done so. Overshoes are removed before entering the inner house. In addition to dinner, guests may be invited to take a sauna with the host. Family members appreciate simple compliments. Flowers can be given when visiting or sent later as a "thank you." Cut flowers without a vase are more appropriate than potted flowers and do not need to be unwrapped when presented.

Eating: When invited for dinner, visitors should sit where the host asks them to, and should wait to eat until the host or hostess begins eating. Table conversation is light and refined, and it is advisable to avoid discussing religion or politics. Guests should show genuine interest in their host but should not ask personal questions. Compliments on the food are appropriate. The continental style of table etiquette, with the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right, is followed. Good restaurants are strict on matters of dress. Loud talking should be avoided. The check is presented on request and is paid at the table. A tip for the waiter is included in the bill, but the doorman and coat checker expect tips.

*Culturgrams are briefings to aid understanding of, feeling for, and communication with other people. Culturgrams are condensations of the best information available. Your insights will be appreciated. If you have refining suggestions, please contact Brigham Young University David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies, Publication Services, 280 HRCB, Provo, Utah 84602 (801) 378-6528. Copyright © 1986. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.

Personal Appearance: Finnish women are fashion conscious. Finnish high standards of fashion are internationally known. Adult clothing is generally formal on festive occasions. Even teenagers may wear ties and hats. Hats are worn during winter; men remove their hats when entering a house, church, or elevator, or when speaking to another person.

Gestures: It is considered bad manners to talk with hands in one's pockets. It is important to look a person in the eyes when speaking. It is proper to cross the legs with one knee over the other, but it is not appropriate to sit with one ankle over the other knee. Folding one's arms is a sign of arrogance and pride. If a yawn cannot be suppressed, the mouth should be covered. A smile is always appreciated, but ladies should use caution in smiling at male strangers.

Traveling: Taxis can be found at taxi stations or summoned by telephone. Some taxi drivers speak English. Drivers do not expect tips. Bus tickets are bought on the bus from the driver, as are tram tickets. Train tickets are purchased at the station or on the train if one arrives late. Public transportation in the urban areas is excellent.

THE PEOPLE

General Attitudes: Finns enjoy nature. They maintain high ideals of loyalty and reliability; promises and agreements are taken seriously. Finns are much more reserved in showing emotion than Americans. They are very proud of Finland.

Population: The population of Finland is approximately 4.9 million, and is growing at an annual rate of 0.4% (0.9% in U.S.). A majority of the people are Finns, although there is a significant Swedish minority and very small minorities of native Lapps and Russians. The population density is only 41 people per square mile, the third lowest rate in Europe (58 in U.S.). Due to the extreme northern location of Finland, however, more than half of the population live in the southern part of the country.

Language: Over 93% of the population speak Finnish, a member of the Finno-Ugrian language family. Swedish, although spoken by only about 7% of the people, is also an official language. There are also small minorities that speak Lappish or Russian. English is widely spoken as a second language, especially among the young and well educated.

Religion: The two state churches are the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Orthodox Church of Finland. Currently, 91.5% of the population belong to the Lutheran Church and 1.2% to the Orthodox Church. There are also small groups of Roman Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and Protestants.

LIFESTYLE

The Family: Because of a decrease in the proportion of working people to those receiving pensions, the Finnish government is now trying to increase the birth rate; paid maternity leave was extended to about 11 months in 1986. The average size of a Finnish family is 3 people (3.1 in U.S.). Finland has the second highest abortion rate in the world (U.S. is 13th).

Marriage and Dating: Dating begins at about age 15, at first in groups, then in couples. The younger set usually walks, while the older youth drive cars. Movies and dances are popular dating activities. Premarital relationships are being accepted more and more by the Finns. Many young couples are living together under "open covenants" instead of the traditional covenant of marriage. Public displays of affection are more common than in the past, especially among the youth.

Social and Economic Levels: Finns place great emphasis on social and economic development and pay an income tax proportional to their earnings. Housing is expensive and difficult to find, but most Finns own their homes. Often both parents must work full-time to support the family. Many families live in large apartment complexes and enjoy all modern conveniences. Many own cars, televisions, telephones, and various household appliances. Some city families also own a summer cottage in the countryside. Finland's social security program is comparable to those of other industrialized European nations.

Diet: Foods in Finland are much the same as those in the United States, though Finns generally eat more fish and fewer vegetables than Americans. Reindeer steak is a Finnish specialty, as is salmon and Smorgasbord. Finns also enjoy other seafood, cheeses, potatoes, and Karelian stew. The growing season is short, so fresh produce is not readily available in the wintertime.

Work: Stores are usually open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 or 6 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Banks are open from 9:15 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. during the week and closed on Saturdays and Sundays. The average workweek in Finland is 38.2 hours, one of the shortest in the world.

Recreation: Physical fitness is important to most Finns. Various sports are the most popular leisure activities; they include track and field, Finnish baseball, ice hockey, hunting, soccer, skiing, and skating. Sporting events often take place on weekends.

Holidays: The most important holidays are New Year's Day, Easter (2 days), First of May, Whitsun (Pentecost), Midsummer (summer solstice), Independence Day (December 6), Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and the day after Christmas. Christmas is an important day for Finnish families. On Christmas, visiting is proper by invitation only; on the day after, visiting among friends and neighbors is popular.

THE NATION

Land and Climate: Finland is about the same size as the state of New Mexico. Forests, lakes, and rivers dominate the Finnish landscape. About 70% of the area is forest, and 10% is water; Finland has approximately 65,000 lakes. Only 9% of the land is arable. Finland is located at about the same latitude as Alaska, Siberia, and southern Greenland; a third of its total length is north of the Arctic Circle. Though somewhat tempered by the warm Gulf Stream, the climate is characterized by long, cold, snowy winters and short, cool summers.

History and Government: About 2000 years ago, a group of people from Russia and Estonia migrated to the area now called Finland. By the 700s, they had taken the country from the native Lapps. From the 1100s, Sweden controlled the region until Finland was joined to the Russian Empire in 1809 as an autonomous Grand Duchy. On December 6, 1917, shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, Finland declared its independence. After a brief civil war, Finland adopted a republican constitution in 1919. During World War II, Finland twice fought the Soviet Union — from 1939 to 1940 and from 1941 to 1944. As a result of these wars, Finland was forced to cede one-tenth of its land to the Soviets. In 1948, Finland signed a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union; it acknowledged Finnish neutrality. Since that time Finland has pursued a policy of cooperation with the Soviet Union as well as friendship with the West. The government consists of a parliament, headed by the prime minister and a popularly elected president. The main political parties in Finland are the Social Democratic Party and the National Coalition (Conservative) Party. Each controls about 25% of the seats in the parliament. The Centre Party and the Finnish Communist Party are significant minorities. Over 80% of the people are registered to vote, the highest percentage in the world. All males enter military service when 19 years old and serve at least 8 months (11 months to become an officer).

Economy: The Finnish economy has been based on lumber, but since World War II continuous efforts have been made to widen the industrial base. Today, although forestry accounts for about 50% of Finland's exports, shipbuilding, chemicals, textiles, and other industries are also important to the nation's income. Finland's gross national product (GNP) per capita is $10,483 ($14,300 in U.S.). The economy is growing at an annual rate of 2.9%. Finland is also a major producer of oats and is self-sufficient in other grains, meat, and dairy products. For the last 10 years, the average inflation rate has been high, but the unemployment rate has been relatively low. The unit of currency is the Finnish *mark*, divided into 100 pennies.

Education: Education is a major priority of the Finnish government. Every child is required to attend a free comprehensive school for at least 9 years, after which he or she may attend a vocational school or complete 3 years of senior secondary school; Finland has the highest rate of enrollment in secondary schools in the world. Many students go on to further studies at one of Finland's 9 universities. Tuition must be paid at all universities. The literacy rate is 99%. Many Finns are well read; public libraries are well patronized.

Transportation: The number of Finns owning cars has increased steadily, though the cost of fuel is exorbitant. Roads are good, but there are few freeways. Buses and trains are inexpensive, comfortable, and punctual.

Health: Finland takes great pride in its health programs. Health care is socialized, reliable, and modern. Finland ranks second in the world in the ratio of nurses to patients and sixth in doctors-to-patients. For further medical information contact International Health Consultants, PO Box 34582, Bethesda, MD 20817.

For Further Information

Because space is so limited in this *Culturgram* and needs are so varied, no suggested readings are included. We recommend a visit to your local library or bookstore. Check *Books in Print* and various cataloging systems for country-specific titles. Review *Encyclopedia Britannica* or similar comprehensive summaries. The U.S. government publishes *Country Profiles* which many libraries subscribe to. Computer searches (DIALOG, SDC, BRS, ISI) are now available at most major libraries. Contact Embassy of Finland, 3216 New Mexico Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016, or the Finland National Tourist Board 655 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017. The U.S. Embassy in Finland is located at Itainen Puistotie 14A, Helsinki, Finland.

How to Use This Culturgram

Quickly read the whole text as an overview. Then circle or give priority numbers to specific questions you have or ideas you want to pursue. Use the *Culturgram* as a guide to check on regional differences and current situations.

Rev. 1/88

END

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